

## **REMARKS**

### **I. Introduction**

Claims 14 to 28 are pending in the present application. In view of the following remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for immediate allowance, and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

### **II. Rejection of Claims 14 to 28 Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a)**

Claims 14 to 28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 7,226,234 ("Gordy et al."). It is respectfully submitted that Gordy et al. does not anticipate these claims for at least the following reasons.

As an initial matter, the **June 5, 2007** issue date of Gordy et al. is **after** the **October 1, 2004** international filing date of the present Application, and therefore, Gordy et al. does not qualify as a reference under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a). Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that this rejection be withdrawn.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that Gordy et al. does not anticipate the present claims for at least the following additional reasons. Claim 14 relates to a ball socket for receiving a ball, including: a first half-socket; a second half-socket, each of the first half-socket and the second half-socket having an at least partially spherical interior surface; and at least one elastically deformable region integrally formed with the first half-socket and the second half-socket. The elastically deformable region is in a load-free state when the ball is completely inserted into the ball socket.

Gordy et al. describes an arrangement for connecting a rod end to a headed pin. The arrangement includes, inter alia, two housing pieces 12A, 12B, which are joined end-to-end by an integral hinge 18. In an assembled state, the two housing pieces 12A, 12B are further joined face-to-face via prongs 20 and prong receptacles 22, and a pin 24 mates with the assembled housing pieces 12A, 12B in respective recesses 28A, 28B. However, Gordy et al. does not disclose, or even suggest, that a first half-socket and the second half-socket have an at least partially spherical interior surface. **Although main portions 26A, 26B of respective housing pieces 12A, 12B, which the Office Action considers to constitute first and second half-sockets, do appear to have partially spherical outer surfaces, as is apparent from Figs. 3 to 6 of Gordy et al., the inner surfaces of housing pieces 12A, 12B, i.e., the surfaces of recesses 28A, 28B where pin 24 mates**

**with housing pieces 12A, 12B, are mainly cylindrical and not spherical at all.**

Furthermore, Gordy et al. does not disclose, or even suggest, a ball socket for receiving a ball, including, inter alia, a first half-socket, a second half-socket and at least one elastically deformable region integrally formed with the first half-socket and the second half-socket, where the elastically deformable region is in a load-free state when a ball is completely inserted into a ball socket. **As is apparent from column 3, lines 7 to 18, as well as from the figures of Gordy et al., when ball portion (B) (see page 3 of Office Action) of pin 24 is completely inserted into assembled main portions 26A, 26B, which the Office Action considers to constitute a ball socket, the integral hinge 18 is flexed and, therefore, not in a load-free state.**

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that Gordy et al. does not anticipate claim 14 for at least these reasons.

Claims 27 and 28 include features analogous to those of claim 14 and are therefore not anticipated by Gordy et al. for at least the reasons set forth above.

As for claims 15 to 26, which ultimately depend from claim 14 and therefore include all of the features of claim 14, it is respectfully submitted that Gordy et al. does not anticipate these dependent claims for at least the reasons set forth above.

In view of all of the foregoing, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

### **III. Conclusion**

It is therefore respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable. All issues raised by the Examiner having been addressed, an early and favorable action on the merits is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: October 10, 2008

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